

A
PRVDENT
AND
SECURE
CHOYCE.

Worthy of due Consideration
being a sure Land-mark to all those
who have been tossed to and
fro in these wavering
Times.

Written by H. G. Gent.

Μνημόνευε πῶθεν ἐκπέπρωκας καὶ μετανοήσων καὶ
τὰ σέθεν ἔργα πύνησον. Αποκ. 2. 5.

*Remember from whence thou art fallen
and Repent, and doe thy first workes.*

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OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK



TO THE READER.

IT is the garbe of this Age to guild the out-side with faire pretences. Yet (courteous Reader) take mee as I am, free from superficial actions : I have a long time lived in this Sea of afflictions : and by these late Tempests have been driven from my Harbour, to which I was wonted. I have found my Ship uncertaine ; the Cable being feeble ; and in all my search, and that no short one, I never found a more sure Pilot, then this *Prudent and Secure choyce*. Take it, and thoroughly view it ; and I doubt not but it will prove a safe ballast to thee, as I hope it will to mee ; Containing all the Controversies, most briefly and learnedly, be-

To the Reader.

twene the Church and the Apostate members. Make it thy owne, and I doubt not but thou wilt returne thanks to God. I had thought to have made a larger Preface ; but that had beene, to have lighted a candle before the Sunne, which obscureth the Starres ; wherefore pardon,

*Thy most affectionate
Friend,*

W. V.



A PRUDENT AND

Secure choyce of Beliefe.

TO

HIS DEARE PROTESTANT

FRIEND.

Sr.

Since it hath pleased God to put a period to the common professed Religion of this Nation, and that by Authoritie of PARLIAMENT; me thinkes you stand at a gaze what to resolve, especially observing what a laughter it hath hatched, never feather'd, untill the destruction thereof. You know that nothing can be of greater importance then the profession of a true Religion, though little apprehended by such as rise no higher then sense can levell, especially in these scandalous confusions, where Truth may seeme more

To his deare Friend.

*excusably declined what hath bene my
cleare and peaceable resolution, in the
distempers give mee leave in loue and
friendship, to communicate, by these few
Papers, to your selfe whose Happinesse I
tender as my owne: assured, that if you
peruse them with diligence and sincere
love of Truth in this more then ever,
you shall experience me,*

Your true Friend
and Servant,

H. G.




A
PRVDENT AND
SECVRE CHOICE.

* *
*

CHAP. I.

The Question stated upon Suppositions prudently not questionable.

- I.  Suppose first, That our blessed Saviour, being to depart in visible presence from this World, his last care was to leave his Church provided of such as should sufficiently Teach, Govern, and advance it. To whom and their Successors for that purpose, hee promised his especiall assistance and protection to the end of the world. *As my Father sent mee so I send you, Joh. 20. vers. 21. Going into the whole world*

world Preach the Gospell, Mark. 16. Here we see the Apostles commission not onely to goe as being sent, but also to send others their successors with the like Authority to be successively delivered, since the Apostles, in their owne persons could not goe into the *whole World*. Especially, if by the whole world, wee understand both place, and time to the end thereof. That also be left ample power for the perfect Government of the same Church, that of Saint *Math. 28.* deserveth especiall consideration : *All power is given to mee in heaven and in earth, going therefore teach all Nations.* Where having said all Power is given to mee, Hee presently practiseth and giveth the like, saying. *Going therefore, &c.* Moreover, that wee may know nothing is wanting to the perpetuall government of his Church, and that justly it may be assured to be directed, not so much by humane industry, as by the Spirit of God, he promised, *Joh. 14.* And I will pray my Father and hee will give you another Comforter, that hee may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of Truth.

2.

It cannot be denyed, but these places taken together enforce an eminent, perpetuall, and

and infallible authority of Christs Church : for they are to be understood as they lye or not, if they are, then there is a Church constantly governing in a Spirit of Truth, even to the end of the World ; if not, what Text is there, that may not maliciously be wrested to a strange sense, by Tongues lounding nothing more sacredly, then Scripture ; witnesse the times experience.

Thus all Sectaries, though contrary amongst them themselves, avouch for their undoubted warrant holy Scripture ; when it is evident their Prooves are not out of Scripture, but out of their private Judgements. It must then be confessed hard to convince any thing by Scripture alone ; Not for that it containeth not all necessary Truth, and instruction to Salvation, but because following private judgements, wee may erre in the sense thereof.

3.

I suppose there is a Visible Church, *vid. he*
that beareth the true markes of Christs *Rougher*
promised Providence converting Nations,
knowne throughout all the World, renowned for continuall Succession, knit in Unity, adorned with unanimous consent of Doctors in all Nations, maintained by Councils,

cells, hated by all, though disagreeing Sectaries, beautified with multitudes of Holy men, enriched with glorious Martyrs; finally Professing and teaching all Christian piety; that justly it may be said, *Here is the finger of GOD*; this the light here, God speaketh to the world, in one and the same voyce, by Christ, and his Apostle, and succeeding Church, not dis-joynted by damnable Doctrines: for what Age of men could so conspire with uniforme Contradiction to their venerable Predecessours, and to their owne ruine, imbrace Errours hard to nature? Or, how could a few be so prevalent, as by degrees to seduce the whole World, and that without note! Sooner may the censurers be suspected of mistake, and the Church judged better able to justifie their questioned Doctrines, then these not disproved, to overthrow it.

4.

Fourthly, I suppose, what Truth it selfe denounceth Mark. 16. *Hee that will not believe shall be damned.* This sentence doubtlesse extends to all dis-beliefe of the Gospell sufficiently proposed, for before he said, *going into the World preach the Gospell.* Which is not onely his Relurrection (though it was pronounced

nounced by occasion of doubt made, thereof) but many things which hee had to say to them, which then they could not beare away. However no Christian will deny, but the disbeleif of Gods word is damnable, and this is sufficient for my present purpose. Hence it followeth, that amongst different Opinions concerning the same Scripture, that part is lesse secure that denyeth, since for Dis-belief, damnation is denounced, not for belief.

5.

Fifthly, I Suppose, as consequent to what is said, That if any Article commonly believed, be judged hard by any private man (and what prime article of Beliefe is not hard?) It is not secure for him to condemne it, relying only upon humane reason, though joyned with private interpretation of Scripture (for hee may with the same breath deny all Mysteryes) and the most hee can bring is but a shew of Probability not different from *Arians* and other confessed Heritickes: consequently insufficient to disprove the contrary professed Belief, though it be supposed but probably proved out of holy Scripture. But he must produce cleare Scripture; without addition, diminution, supposition, or interpretation; since these are subject to doubt, and

and consequently in danger of leading into
dis-beliefe.

6.

Sixthly, for my purpose, I require of Dis-
believers onely, an acknowledgment of a

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in all
points*

* Here (Reader) mistake not
the Author, for whereas in many
places he useth the terme, Pro-
bable, hee taketh them not for
meere Probabilities, but for in-
fallible Truths. But giving thee
the longer end of the staffe, hee
desireth no more of thee.

morall * Pro-
bability, in the
proofe, Belei-
vers bring out
of holy Scrip-
ture; and this
cannot be de-
nied to an an-
cient Church, consisting of

Councils, and
Learned men in all parts of the Christian
World, agreeing in one, without any altera-
tion evidently proved.

7.

Finally, observe that the Christian world
is for the most part divided into Believers and
disbelievers: believers rely on Gods eternall
Truth, declared by his Church, the most im-
partiall interpreter of his Word, not looking
so much upon the hardnesse of the thing pro-
posed, as the proposall; which if it fayle in
one, all may be doubted, if it be sufficient to
warrant one; it also warranteth all, being
equally the same to all Disbelievers are of
divers

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the Church*

divers sorts, pretending Scripture, but according to their private Opinions; hence it is that they agree in little more then opposing Believers.

8.

These Grounds supposed prudently not questionable: the question is among all Religious; which is securely to be chosen? I answer The Ancient believing: because it must be supposed at least to have Probable proofes out of Scripture and to containe no hurt, in which case the Beliefe is justified. Disbelievers though their grounds be as probable as those of the *Arians*, yet they are in danger, because they dis-believe; according to this rule all particular Points controverted are easily and clearly proved:

For Example.

CHAP. 2.

9. The reall presence of Christs body and blood in the Sacrament of our Lords Supper is securely believed, with danger denied.

TO justifie this Belief, wee have first the words of Christ promising *John. 6.* My flesh is truly meate, and my blood is truly
~~It a contradiction~~ *drinke in it*
~~wek God wrought way can~~
~~not, nor not in y^e great miracle~~

drinke, he that eateth my flesh, &c. He that, contrarie to the Auntient Church, will not believe this of the reall flesh of Christ in the Sacrament, induced by these obscure words, The Spirit giveth life, the flesh profiteth nothing; exposeth himselfe to danger of Disbeliefe with the Jewes, and blasphemie; since veri. 56. It is sayd, *he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in mee and I in him.* And St. Paul. Colos. 1. *You which were in times past strangers and enemies, &c. hath bee now reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to make you holy:* How then can these words, The flesh profiteth nothing. without danger be understood of the flesh of Christ? Is it not profit to us, that Christ dwelleth in us, and wee in him? That wee are reconciled in the body of his flesh?

10.

Secondly, wee have the words of Christ performing: *This is my body, take, eat, doe this, &c.* Which words, if wee wrest from the *videlicet* plaine received, to a figurative sense, wee must bring cleere Scripture for it, else our interpretation is dangerous, denying so cleare, and high a mystery of Faith, upon humane Motives onely.

Thirdly, wee have the testimony of St. Paul,

Paul. 1 Cor. 11. If these places be obscure ;
wee have besides the consent of Nations, for a
Thousaud five hundred yeares , without
notorious contradiction.

Finally, in Beliefe and Practice there is no
impiety , but praise and honour to Christ,
who upon prudent grounds is supposed pre-
sent, under the formes of Bread and Wine,
after the words of Consecration pronounced in
the perion of Christ : he is received with
Reverence, love, thankfulnesse, and lively re-
membrance of his Sacred passion, &c. For
denyall of this Beleife, wee have but small
Authority , not one cleare testimony of
Scripture.

II.

Only it may be objected, That if Christ be
not under those formes of Bread and Wine,
there is danger of Idolatry.

The contrary is manifest ; for Idolatry
giveth divine worship to a Creature, choo-
sing such a creature or thing for God ; but
Beleivers adore, not Bread, nor Wine, nor any
Creature but Christ, God and Man, whom
upon invincible Grounds they suppose pre-
sent Sacramentally, who in case he were not
there, yet Christians adore him, and not the
Bread.

B

Know

Know therefore, that Adoration consisteth of outward reverence, conjoynd with interiour as of Body and Soule.

this was an account for a script
The outward is indifferent to God and Creatures, the interiour joynd with it, makes the difference; Exteriour reverence applied by our intention to a temporall Lord, is but a Civill worship; the same applied by our intention to a Saint, as a Creature highly in Gods favour, is a higher degree of honour, then the former; yet within the limits of Worship, inferiour to the worship of God.

It is likewise applied by our Intention, to God our Creator and Saviour; thus it is perfect Adoration, due only to God: whence our adorations are distinguished only by our knowledge and esteeme of the object adored.

we be crucified by this so we can fully give our hearts to God for his sake but we must not deny him
Hee then that beleiveth that Christ is contained Sacramentally under the formes of Bread and Wine, may securely adore, since his adoration, proceeding from his Belief, by it transferreth the outward act from all Creatures, and directeth it to God, even in case in his immediate beleif, hee should possibly be supposed mistaken. There remaineth no danger then in the Beleif, but much in the denyall, *Hee that will not believe, &c.*

CHAP. 3.

12. *The Sacrifice of Masse is securely believed, dangerously denied.*

Masse is a compleate performance of that Command : *Do this in remembrance of mee, Luk. 22.* Wherein by the Priest, prayers are said for the Church, the holy Scripture is read : all the parts and Ceremonies thereof represent the life and passion of Christ ; who by meanes of those words, pronounced in his Name, *Hoc est corpus meum*, is duly offered in Sacrifice, to the honour of God and profit of his Church. Whence Faith, Gratitude, and love to our Redeemer is daily renewed, and the knowne Prophecy of *Malac. chap. 1.* fulfilled ; From the rising of the Sunne, to the going downe of the same, my Name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place a pure oblation is Sacrificed and offered to my Name, according to auncient and common translation. Thus the Church alwayes from the Apostles taught and practiced. Securely I follow it ; It is dangerous to deny it.

*All this I apply to thyself
as now in force as ever*

Confession & yr
relaxation

[12]

power of abso
lution

CHAP. 4.

13. Sacramentall confession and Absolu-
tion are securely practised.

exam

Here a Christian, after due examination of his Conscience, with heartly sorrow for his finnes, and purpose to amend (which acts are necessarily required) confesseth his sins, and expecteth Absolution by the Ministry of an approved Priest, what danger can there be in this ? The *Jewes* charged Christ of blasphemy, Saying ; *who can forgive finnes but God ?* Against Christ they sinned, first denying him to be God, which sinne hee chastized by miracle. *Math. 9.*

Secondly, not beleeving a Power given to man to forgive finnes : this also he blamed ; And that you may know , that the Sonne of man hath Authority in earth to forgive finnes, &c. And the multitude glorified God who had given such Authority to men ; to his Apostles, *John. 22.* Hee saith, Receive yee the holy Ghost , whose finnes yee remit, they are remitted to them, whose finnes yee retain they are retained, *Math. 18.* Whatsoever yee shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever yee shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.

Question-

Questionlesse, the prime sense of these words imports a power given to men to forgive sinnes; nothing then is presumptuously believed, but received as a mercifull priviledge, left by Christ to his dearly redeemed Church.

In opposition, I find no Scripture; but only admirations of a few denyers in comparison of the Believers, though they deny not, but temporall Princes may give Commission to subjects, to forgive Treasons against themselves dangerous then is their deniall.

CHAP. 5.

Securely wee beleive one Church, under one Head thereof.

14. **N**Ecessarie it is, in one Family one Master, in one Citty one Major, in one Company one Captaine, in one Army one Generall, in one Common-wealth one State, in one Kingdome one King. And can it beare any colour of offence, to believe that in the most perfect Common-wealth, instituted by Christ, there should be one flock under one Pastor? *ut fiat unum ovile et unus Pastor.* Where there are two, not subordinate Governements, there is not one Common-wealth,

*of 7 church by power & one
ward from both*

wealth, and two peaceable governing Kings, argue two Kingdomes, where then in Christians wee find divers Spirituall governments, not subordinate; wee must acknowledge divers Churches, yet wee all say in one *Creed*, delivered by the Apostles, conformable to what Christ promised, *I believe the holy Catholique Church*. Not one if not subordinate to one visible head, who as hee ordained a visible Church, so hee ordained a visible Pastor. That there may be made one flocke and one Pastor. Necessary for the preservation of Unity, and decent Conformity, without which no Common-wealth is permanent.

15.

I find this no where verified but in the successors of *Peter*, and the Church adhering to them, cleerely promised, *Math. 16. vers. 8. Thou art Peter, and upon this rocke will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevaile against it.*

Behold one rocke, one Church, and that permanent, against all assaults: now knowne by its singular Constancy, in the midst of continuall assaults, *Iohn. 21. To Peter* Christ said, *Feed my sheepe*; which words imply the office of a Pastor; that is, not onely
to

to provide nourishment, but also to Govern and defend, without which it were not compleat.

That also these words were spoken to *Peter* only, and consequently only to his successors; It is manifest by that three-fold Interrogation, *Simon Peter louest thou mee?* Especially when hee added, More then these. Whereby he excluded the rest of his Apostles. To which when Saint *Peter* had answered, that he loued him. Christ replied to him singularly; *Feed my sheepe.* That is, the supreme dignity of Pastorship and Vicegerency *I give you*, requireth a singular love, and as you love mee, so be a true Pastor in my Church.

Grant that by probable arguments all said may appeare not evident, I will not dispute it; yet the common voyce of the World so long continued, expressed also in the *Creeds*, may justifie the Believers of one, holy Catholique, and Apostolique Church: and not one, unlesse in one belief under one supreme visible Governour; whom such as reject out of a perswasion, that they need none, but Christ; make many Churches disagreeing in confused Beliefes, every one equally challenging **C H R I S T** for their Governour;

securely then one Church under one visible
Pastor is believed, but with danger denied :
Hee that will not beleive the Catholique
Church, he that heareth you heareth mee, he
that dispiseth you dispiseth mee &c.

CHAP. 6.

16. *Securely wee commend our selves to
the intercession of Saints.*

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TO justify this, it is sufficient if wee prove
it conformable to reason, and no injurie
to Christ. Saint Paul commended himselfe
to the prayers of Christians; what must be
answered in his excuse will secure us, since
wee goe to Saints, as Intercessors, not as
Givers, and so truly goe to Christ. You say
Saints cannot heare us. How know you
this? Not by Scripture. It witnesseth that
many Prophets saw objects, not only absent,
but not existent untill many hundred yeares
after their time, only by Divine inspiration,
and shall wee now deny this to Saints in-
joying God face to face? Nor by reason :
for if their hearing were by corporall eares,
there might be some difficultie; yet since their
hearing is understanding, which is indifferent
to conceive objects, as well absent as pre-
sent,

sent, this difficultie is vaine, since wee know not how our soule understands, nor how our eyes see, or eares heare; What hindereth then, but that securely I may believe it.

CHAP. 7.

17. *What is Secure concerning the making and worshipping of Images.*

FOR a safe resolution in this Point, it is *this necessary.*

First, to declare, what manner of Worship *agst* is pretended due to Images; and for Example, J will discourse of the Image of *of com* CHRIST Crucified, whereby it will appear, what with proportion may be said *not as* of the rest. The Worship then pretended *by an* lawfull, tendeth not to the Image, out of *his eye* apprehension of Divinity therein contained, *sition* but onely out of a Faith in CHRIST; re- *our 20* presented and imagined to us by that Image, *com. 10* that is, believing CHRIST represented by *xy (re)* it in manner as the once Visibly appeared, *worship* worthy of all honour, which by his Image, as his representative, I give him; *our* Whence evident it is. First, that by such worship CHRIST is immediately worshipped;

ped; that is, for Himselfe, and his Picture onely for him, both morally one object of the worship.

Secondly, that no honour due to GOD is transferred to a Creature, since God is onely truly Worshipped for himselfe, and no Creature religiously worshipped, but for GOD.

Thirdly, that whatsoever honour exterior or interior, tendeth toward the Image, is not for it, nor resteth there (as in case of Idolatry) but by our Faith, and interior reverence is transferred to CHRIST, for whom and to whom it is exhibited.

Since therefore perfect Worship consisteth both in interior, and exterior acts conjoyned; the interior giving life, and the very being of worship to the exterior, the interior respecting Christ for himselfe, and the Image, onely for CHRIST; Image-worship differeth infinitely from Idolatry. In a word, the worship here in question, is onely an outward honour toward the Image, proceeding from an outward reverence to CHRIST represented. As *St. Mary Magdalen* worshipped Christ as Man, out of a beliefe of the Divinity in him, or rather as some worship their Communion for the relation

lation it hath to CHRIST, by their Belief: So in like manner, worship given to Images, is for the connexion they have with Christ himselfe.

The Question then is, whether the worship of Images thus understood, bee lawfull?

18. **A**Ccording to the new Translation of our *English* Bibles, the negative part against the Believers seemeth justified, *Exod. 20.* Expresly forbidding both making and worshipping any Image whatsoever.

But this Translation is evidently false, unlesse it meane Images with relation to Idolatry; For in the Law, what is forbidden to be worshipped, is also forbidden to bee made. *Thou shalt not make to thy selfe, nor worship*: But the Law forbiddeth not Images to be made, as it appeareth by the Images in the Temple, and Cherubims over the Arke, the brazen Serpent, *Numb. 21. Kings lib. 1. Chap. 6. vers. 23, 27, 29.* (according to the English translation) Lyons, Oxen, &c. *1 Kings, chap. 7. vers. 29.* Then likewise, it forbiddeth not Image-worship. Image then is a false Translation, unlesse it be under-

Rood

stood with relation to Idolatry, then it maketh nothing against the use of Images declared.

Moreover, wee have manifest warrant in holy Scripture, both for the making and worshipping of Images, not reconcilable with the Law, if understood as the new Translations import.

*nor for
age
this* The Prophet David teacheth, *Adore the foot-stoole of our Lord, for hee is holy.* Was not the Arke a creature? Yet because God is holy, whose foot-stoole it was, it was judged worthy to be worshipped.

*we shall
know
C. By
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before
Altar
but no
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not
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was* Joshua chap. 7. Fell prostrate before the Arke: what did hee lesse then is required in the worship of Images? Or did he breake Gods Command?

Wee read, *Exod. 3. 28. Genes. 18. Jos. 5. 14. Apoc. 5.* and in other places, How the holy Prophets adored GOD in Images, or in Angels representing his Person, prostrating themselves before them, and though their attention was directed to God; yet their outward act of worship was directed to those sensible apparitions, or Images representing God to their Imaginations; wherein they conceived God as represented, and those Images representing God morally one object, *now in whole ch. nor such thing in
only in ch. 12. Abraham bowed
will respect his, nor worship that
was adored at 20. in the other places*

in the same manner ; as it happeneth in the honour of Images , and in the worship of the figurative Communion.

19.

Finally, it is manifest, by the end of the Law ; that Idolatry, not Image-worship is forbidden ; which was, that the honour of G O D should bee unviolably kept , by giving Divine worship onely to him : Therefore in the beginning hee said, *I am thy Lord God, thou shalt have no other Gods before me.* The reason also hee added , why they should make no Idols ; *For I am thy Lord God, a jealous God ;* That is, make to thy selfe nothing for thy G O D ; for *I am thy God.*

Images, I have proved were Comman- ded ; therefore Images as declared, oppose not Gods honour , consequently are not forbidden , else wee must prove a manifest contradiction in the Law. Thus the received use of Images is justified , and not to bee cryed downe by new Dis-believers, whose danger is apparent , untill they bring evident proofes.

It may be objected, that since Idolatry hath beene begun , and maintained by Images ; and since men are prone to apply them-

themselves most to Corporall objects, the secure way is to abandon Images, at the least in Churches.

This is spoken without Law or reason: Law there can be none brought, since, not Images, but Idols, were the beginning of Idolatry. Images I have proved warrantable in holy Scripture.

Nor Reason; for whereas an Idoll representeth nothing besides it selfe, and so is worshipp'd without any farther relation; an Image representeth a true object, distinct from it selfe; therefore moveth a man to a reverence, proportionable to the object represented.

Whence in reason, an Idoll occasioneth Idolatry, not representing any farther object, whether our thoughts and honour may be transferred; when an Image of a true object, necessarily draweth our minds and reverence to something besides it selfe. So that aske any simple Believer, whether hee pray to the Image, or put any confidence in it, he will answer, No. Aske him againe, when he is kneeling before a Picture, with his eyes fixed on it, whether he directs his Prayer? He will answer to God, or some Saint represented, whose intercession hee desireth.

What

What hurt is in this?

St. *Mary Magdalen* prostrated her selfe, kissed and bathed with her teares the feet of CHRIST, what justified that act? But the union which those Sacred feet have with his Divinity, which yet she saw not, but apprehended by Faith? Though betweene Christ and his Picture, there be not so immediate, yet there is a morall connexion sufficient to termine one morall act of Adoration. Securely then I honour CHRIST and his Image as one morall object; therefore cannot dishonour the Picture without danger of dishonouring the *Prototypen*.

CHAP. 8.

20. *The like security is shewed in all other Articles believed in generall.*

Who can doubt, but that Purgatory, Free-will, Merit of good workes, by the grace of God; Tradition, Indulgences, &c. are probably proved by Believers; That also the Belief containeth no hurt; securely then they are believed. Probability also is the most Disbelievers can challenge; unsuffi-

*probable
proof
by reason
(outrage)*

unfufficient to secure them, since the contrary may be true and obliging to Beliefe; for though they produce seeming places of Scripture, obscure Authority of auntient Fathers, endlesse reasonings, and disputes; satisfactory to few, they can convince no more, even in their owne judgements, then a shew of Probability, which all, though contradictory, equally pretend.

If then there appeare no harme, but probability in the Beliefe, Disbelievers are in danger, being nearer to that sentence. *Hee that will not Believe shall bee condemned.*

Wherefore, if any endeavour to disprove any such Point of beliefe, by Scripture, Reason, or Authority; unlesse they bee so evident that they suffer no Interpretation, or solution (which is not possible) I reject them as impertinent, and proving an insufficient Probability, which to prevent endlesse Contention I grant, and the most that can be expected. But withall asks, whether they can deny, but that the contrary Beliefe is apparently proved by great Authority, and probable places of Scripture: they must grant it.

Whence it must needs follow, That to Believe

Believe is secure, and to deny is evidently dangerous.

Hence that Security which some pretend is manifestly proved to be vaine.

They say, God obligeth not men to impossibilities, since then at least, the vulgar sort of people cannot discern those differences wherein Learned men disagree; each one may securely rest in that hee hath beene taught, believing his *Creed, &c.*

If wee rely onely upon Arguments out of Scripture, the probability of the Believer is onely Secure, which is evident notwithstanding the disputable Differences bee not discernable; for who cannot discern a difference betweene Believing and Disbelieving, which though they have equall arguments, yet they cannot bee equally Secure; Probability onely securing Belief.

But that discourse cleerly convinceth the necessity of a Church, as a living rule; For God obligeth us not to impossibilities, but it is impossible for many to judge between the monstrous differences of private mens interpretations of Gods word; Therefore hee obligeth us not to the believe of his Word upon that account: but hath provided a
script
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C
Church,

Church, which for that end hee protecteth, as is before shewed, *Numb. 1. 3.* Which we professe to Believe, when wee say; *I be-lieve the holy Catholique Church*: Suffi-cient as J will prove to guide us in our Be-liefe, if there had beene no Scripture writ-ten.

CHAP. 9.

Grant to Disbelievers probability of Reason, yet their danger is certaine.

12. **S**OME may thinke that this discourse proveth Believers secure, but not that Disbelievers are in danger, if they be ruled according to the meanes and capaci-ty GOD hath given them, and that such are not obstinate denyers of Truth, conse-quently secure.

J grant that invincible Ignorance may ex-cuse disbelievers, as such, from sinne; yet it followeth not that finall Disbeliefe (though invincible) can consist with grace necessary to Salvation; but this J dispute not, nor against these; but such as doe or
may

may discern a difference betweene Beliefe and Disbeliefe, and who may see, that the grounds of Belief are at least probable, and the practice harmlesse.

Notwithstanding, adventure upon the denying part, moved only by the same motives, which they must suppose in confessed Heretickes. Or, let any one define what Disbelievers may be guilty, hee shall either conclude these Disbelievers I speake of, or else acknowledge that there never have been any.

22.

Againe, it may bee urged, that if the Beliefe be supposed probably true, then the denyall is also Probable, then not damnable. I say the Beliefe is not only probably proved; but out of the undeniable Probability, I shew it is sufficient to prove the Beliefe secure, which cannot bee in the Disbeliefe, though it be supposed to have Probability of arguments.

The difference is, because in the things believed, there appeareth no hurt, and in case they bee mistaken, Probability may justify their consent, especially appearing greater then the contrary.

C 2

But

But Disbelieving upon probable seeming grounds (and what Heritique did not thinke hee had probable grounds?) leaveth the disbeliever in certaine danger of denying Christ his Word.

First, because his danger is certaine, in the same degree, as the *Belief* is supposed probably proved : but the Belief is manifestly supposed to bee, at least, Probably proved.

Therefore the Disbelievers danger is manifest.

You will deny the first Proposition; because GOD obligeth us not to the Beliefe of controverted Points, though the one side bee true; but you must consider, who they be that breed the Controversie, and against what Authority; For if every thing that is controverted, is not obligatory, it may be proved wee are obliged to believe scarce any thing: Or, can it be imagined, that CHRIST leaving so strict a Command of Beliefe, would have the execution of it, depend upon Probabilities of dispute? Manifest it is, that the Scriptures are hard. Manifest it is, hee left a Church to direct us, manifest also, is his Command. Then manifest also it is, that
private

private disputes cannot discharge our obligation to Belief. See *Numb. 25.*

Secondly, the Disbelief is as certainly dangerous, as it is certainly not evident (and more evidence is required to free the disbeliever from danger than is necessary to free the Believer) but the disbelief is certainly not evident; Therefore, it is certainly dangerous.

The first Proposition is clear; for if there be not evidence, the contrary may be true, obliging to Belief: That also the disbelief is not evident, appeareth by its Novelty, Inconstancy, disagreements (for there is scarce any Point of Belief but some disbeliever or other assenteth to it) and strong opposition it hath. Neyther can the want of evidence in the Articles believed warrant the disbelievers, who may observe a greater probability for the Belief, else who could believe? Or rather, who could be charged of Heresie? However, it is without question, that if Probability excuse Disbelievers, much more it will justify Believers: Who then would not be secure?

23.

It followeth, that although Disbelievers

C 3

frame

frame to themselves a probable judgement, yet their danger is certaine, because the contrary Belief is doubtlesse probably proved; which may convince them, that they leave the secure Belief, wherein there can bee no danger, and choose that part, where on **C H R I S T**'s denunciation doth fall: and danger knowne breedeth an obligation to a farther inquiry, and removeth such ignorance, which alone can excuse error in Beliefe.

It may bee replied, that where there is Probability of the disbeliefe, it is not faulty; because then **Gods** word is not manifest, consequently no injury to **God**, not to beleve it.

If Probability in disbeliefe excuse from fault, *Jewes, Arians, &c.* are excused; for they have a probability at least, that is, an esteeme and liking of their private grounds (in their Judgements probable) and since such Probabilities may bee found against any point of Faith, none can be obliged to believe.

I confesse, that standing in the Probability conceived, a man denyeth not to believe **Gods** word, which then he doth not know

to bee his Word, if his Ignorance bee invincible; yet because hee cannot but know that the Beliefe is as probably proposed, as Commanded, hee is obliged to a higher search, which certainly will bring him to more evidence of his danger and security of that his Beliefe, by observation of a greater probability in the Beliefe, which hereafter *Numb.* 26, 27. and 30. I will prove to bee an invincible argument of Truth in point of Faith.

Disbelievers finally flatter themselves, that they believe GOD's word, and deny only what they find not contained in holy Scripture.

But first, they must know what is Gods word, before they believe it; they take not the way to know it, by interpreting Scriptures, according to private Judgement, but by looking upon the rule God hath left to the world,

Pro nihil ad nos

CHAP. IO.

*A Rule is necessary to shew what is
to bee Believed.*

24. *And Ch
illig
worth* **H**itherto I have proved Beliefe se-
cure; Disbeliefe dangerous, stan-
ding onely upon private Interpretation of
Scripture; Prudence moving me to choole
that part, which is most remote from danger
of CHRISTs sentence.

Now since the obligation of CHRISTs
Command depends not upon Probabilities,
I will in these Differences arising from diver-
sity of Wit, shew a necessity of a common
Rule, without which Experience sheweth
there is no agreement amongst Christians, no
Constancy, no true Faith; because resolved
no higher than into private Judgement,
which alone maketh Disbeliefe unexcusable,
though it have never so seeming probability.

God commandeth a beliefe of his Word
under paine of Damnation; therefore must
bee supposed to manifest to men, what is
his Word, otherwise how can they be ob-
liged to believe it?

But

But hee doth not manifest, which is his Word, especially in controverted Points, by holy Scripture, or private Spirit; therefore some other rule must bee supposed.

Private Spirit is not sufficient, because it is not universall, leading to Unity, but multiplyed with Contradiction, not discernable amongst so many disagreeing Spirits, which is the true: and who can maintaine his own meaning, only true; and the rest false?

Moreover, a Rule is supposed a common and Secure direction, else no Rule; which with a private Spirit implyeth a contradiction, private Spirits being but private directions; and so private, that it is not knowne wherein they agree; for to one it teacheth one point of Beliefe, and denyeth the rest; To another it teacheth another Point, and denyeth the rest; to a third it teacheth another, and likewise denyeth the rest, &c. So that by some Spirit or other, every point of Beliefe is taught, and every Point denied: How then is it a Rule?

Scripture also is insufficient to declare its owne sense, as appeareth by the great difference amongst Interpreters left to their owne judgements, and contradictory Religions framed

framed thereby ; when some must needs bee deceived of their so assured Senſe ; and who they are who can ſufficiently prove by Scripture alone ?

It is evident, that the preſumptuous confidence of the ſufficiency and cleerneſſe of Scriptures alone, hath cauſed theſe experienced Confuſions and will maintaine them , if It bee not layd aſide.

And prodigious is the blindneſſe which ſeeth it not. For one may truly ſay, there is nothing in the World , that more divideth Schollers and Common-wealths into monſtrous differences , then the ſenſe of Scriptures , left to private Judgements ; when every mans judgement is left free to gueſſe what hee pleaſeth ; that looking this way onely , no man can find any aſſurance of what we are to Believe ; What wonder then, if wee have ſo many contradictory Doctors : Every one the ſole true underſtander of Gods word ? Sole true impugner of Beliefe ? Every one diſproving one Article, and proving another ? Whence all Beliefe is proved , and every Article diſproved by their unſallible Rule , an evident argument of the inſufficiency of this courſe , and that the

the Scripture doth not declare it selfe; therefore it can bee no Rule, to determine contradictory Opinions of the sense of the same, consequently of it selfe, not sufficient what is Gods word.

25.

I declare it evidently; for there is scarce any point of Beliefe, but some disbeliever or other finds it in Scripture, then by their rule, they eyther prove all points of Faith, or that Scripture is no Rule. For amongst them they find out almost all wee believe, in their undoubted Rule; yet looking upon one anothers disagreements, they must say, It is no Rule: The same Scripture regulating to them every point of Beliefe, and the same regulating their disbeliefe in all: Which of these shall the World follow?

Finally, It is as cleare, that resting upon private Interpretations of holy Scripture no high mysterie can oblige to Beliefe; because being subject to Controversies, Probability must bee supposed upon all sides; and why not in one as well as in another? Then they doe not appeare Divine revelations, consequently they oblige not to Beliefe, if then probable arguments against Beliefe be sufficient

cient to excuse the Disbeliefe, all disbeliefe is excusable, consequently no Faith obligeth; another Rule then is necessary.

The texts inducing to this confidence are weake : *You shall not adde a Word*, Deut. 4. *Search the Scriptures*, Joh. 5. *These things are written that you may Believe*, Joh. 20. All Scripture divinely inspired is profitable : They prove as much against the Primitive Church, which doubtlesse was an infallible Rule, and could not cease by the accessse of Scriptures. Neyther doe these Places say, that all is written which **C H R I S T** taught, or that what is written is divine Scripture, or that it needeth no Interpreter, especially not a Church, but a private Spirit onely.

But now wee seeme to deny with the same danger.

Wee deny not any sufficiency on the part of holy Scripture for it is the undoubted Word of **G O D**, left to the interpretation of his Church. But only we deny the sufficiency of our unmannerly Judgements that presume too high.

A Rule then is necessary to fulfill Gods Command, since hee doth not command a saving

saving Beliefe, and leave us so unassured
of his Word.

C H A P. II.

*The onely unfallible Rule to know
Gods word.*

26. **I**S the Church holy, Apostolicall, not hindered in her Continuance, nor disproved in her Doctrine, which remaineth incorrupt, Though the gates of Hell (as was fore-told) breath forth malice at all times against it.

Of this the holy Scripture giveth cleare testimony, *Math. ult. Teach all Nations, behold I am with you every day even to the end of the World.*

Math. 18. 17. If hee shall not heare the Church, let him bee to thee as a Heathen and Publican.

Luk. 10. 16. Hee that heareth you, heareth mee, and hee that contemneth you contemneth mee.

Besides, the Church is called, *Math. 5. The light of the World. Tim. 3. 15. A pillar and firmament of Truth.* These texts sufficiently prove a living and infallible Rule.

Then

Then you will say, The Scripture is the Rule whereby to know the Church, consequently the onely rule of all Beliefe.

True it is, The Church and Scripture give mutuall evidence of one another: yet the first Rule by which wee know both Scripture and the sense thereof, is onely the Church: How then doe wee know the Church?

As the Apostles and Disciples knew CHRIST, by the Testimonies, from God of his Mission; and as succeeding Ages knew their Predecessors eventill this time, by the providence of God, without interruption, never disproved; otherwise there can be no true sense made of CHRISTs Promises of teaching all Nations, of being with it every day to the consummation of the World; of all being obliged to heare it; of being a firmament of Truth and light of the world. That were there no Scripture; as CHRIST was, and his Primitive Church was; so likewise in their Successours, the same Church, even till the Worlds end, is an infallible Rule to know what is to be Believed, untill it be evidently proved; what Age first began to conspire against their Teachers,

Teachers, by devising damnable Errours, hard even to reason and sense, without encountering any publique Opposers, even till these last Hundred yeares, or thereabout; and without this Church wee could not be assured of holy Scriptures.

Certainly there is not any greater prooffe of Gods word, nor shew of his Providence, nor clearer meanes to discide Controversies, than the believing Church wee speake of.

What Authority can compare with it! the Disbelievers only because it confounded their hardnesse of Belief, were forced to that poore shift of adhering to a Church invisible.

If this bee not evident, yet it is manifest that there is no motive of disbeliefe comparable to it. See *Numb.* 3.26. Hence I prove the Church to bee the onely unfallible Rule whereby to know what is to be believed. GOD commanding Belief under paine of damnation, must bee supposed to declare sufficiently what is to be believed: But if the Church bee not a sufficient rule, GOD doth not sufficiently declare to the world what is to bee believed: Therefore we must confesse the Church to be the sufficient Rule consequently infallible. The

The first Proposition is undoubted. The second evident, J have shewed *Chapter 10.* That the Scripture is no sufficient Rule to determine the sense thereof, private Spirit is also uncertaine and not knowne, as J shewed, *Numb. 24.* It followeth then, that eyther the Church must bee the Rule, or that we have no rule.

Moreover, who will have the Scripture the rule, meane, as it is interpreted by themselves, not as it is Interpreted by the Church.

J aske them? Doth their wit lead them to the true Sense? Or the bare Word? Or, both? If the first, then their Wit is the rule: If the second, why doth not the bare Word regulate all sincere understandings, or how could the whole auncient Church be so blind, as not to see it, if it erred as Disbelievers suppose? If both; J aske againe: Whether the Authority of some in this last Age disagreeing in their pretended Rule, and granting it to teach almost every particular Doctrine they deny, can bee prudently esteemed comparable to the consent of an Auncient Church, interpreting Scriptures uniformly, never yet evidently disproved, nor
questio-

questioned for dissenting from the Primitive,
till of late.

27.

*Hence againe, I prove the Church the
only Rule whereby wee know what is to be
Believed.*

THat must be supposed to be the Rule,
which is the most probable Proposall;
but the Church is the more probable propo-
sall; Therefore it is the Rule.

*script
fuer
fuer
v. 2. qu
lo. 1. 1. 1.
za. 1. 1.
J. 1. 1.*

The first Proposition is manifest, for where
GOD commands Belief, hee cannot permit
the contrary Errour to be proposed with grea-
ter Probabilitie.

That the Church is the more probable Pro-
posall, hath all proofes, except only its Ad-
versaries denyall: what Authority, Sancti-
ty, Antiquity, extent, and Uaity is compa-
rable to it?

If you aske here, whether the Wit of men
bee the rule in the Church; I answer, That
the Church guided by the Spirit of GOD,
is the rule.

How doe I know this? By the Church it
selfe, indued with such marks and tokens of

D

Gods

Gods presence in it, that prudently J cannot doubt it. See *Numb.* 3.

The *Jewes* Law was to continue but untill the Comming of the *M E S S I A S*, yet in respect of the great Authority thereof, *C H R I S T* held them excusable adhering to their Law, and denying him selfe to bee the *Messias*; had hee not wrought such Miracles, as no man ever wrought.

No wonder then, if the Church be a rule to Christian believe, untill God worke Miracles to disprove it.

And of what nature had they need to bee?

Disbelievers will tell you; They are the Church.

The new Church of Disbeliefe, not the auntient believing Church: They cannot bee of the Church, and by Disbelieving fight against the Church, which consisteth of Believers.

Their first and onely contention with the Church was because it Believed, and they could not understand how. Yet they could never prove, when the Church first devised

sed that Beliefe; wherefore leaving it, they left also the Primitive Church, though, in words onely, they pretend to follow it.

Securely and prudently such a Rule is believed, with danger denyed; maugre all shew of Reason to the contrary, since it can bee but in shew Probable.

CHAP. 12.

Hee that leaveth this Rule is in evident danger.

28. **I**T cannot bee denyed, but that it is Prudence to rely on such a Church, believing it, rather then any private Wits or reason denying; therefore Secure.

It is evident also, that there is no other Rule, as J shewed *Chapter 10.* Then to forsake this Rule is to runne into danger of errors in Beliefe, this also is proved, *Numb. 24.*

You say, the Church hath erred; therefore is not to bee looked upon as a Rule.

What then ? Are you sure none will say, that the Scriptures have been corrupted ? Grant they have not, yet who can be assured, that hee only understandeth them ?

In the Church protected by CHRIST, you will suppose Errours without prooffe ; because you will have no Rule to containe your judgement within the bonds of Humility, but you can produce no evident prooffe as you must confesse.

Your calling some Scriptures in question, your Interpretations of others, your questions how ? Your moderne disagreeing Doctors, your obscurities out of Antiquity, which is all you can bring ; are but the fruits of Wit, and argue even in your owne Judgements, but a Probability against the former received Articles, invincibly credible.

First, Because the auntient and onely knowne Church hath constantly proved them, by an Uniforme interpretation of holy Scriptures, more prevalent than any new Authoritie can bee to the contrary.

Secondly,

2.

Secondly, *if they were devised since the Primitive Church, it is not possible but it would have been Recorded by many, or some antient Writers: They being Articles, hard and of highest concernment.*

3.

Thirdly, *why shall the judgement of a few Denyers condemne a Beliefe delivered by the same Scripture, interpreted by the same Church, as all other Articles were.*

29.

BY these Prooves well pondered, those supposed Errours will appeare objects of a Christian beliefe invincibly Prudent, and they evidently credible: First declared, not by a Parliament, but by Generall Councils, not in one Kingdome but in many; not by a few dis-agreeing, but by a Consonant voyce throughout all Parts and

D 3

times

*not this in y^e Rom
ish church*

[46]

times of the Christian world ; what more Credible ? Then no Errours, then no markes of an apostating Church.

The Church then remains a Rule, this is at least Probable ; then dangerous to forsake it ; Least hee that liateth it, hateth CHRIST.

30.

BEcause all that will not Believe what most prudently appeareth to bee CHRIST'S word, are in danger of denying CHRIST'S word.

But such are the forsakers of this Rule ; therefore they are in danger, &c.

The major is proved ; because CHRIST cannot bee supposed to command Beliefe, and permit the most prudent motives to Errour.

The minor is certaine ; because the forsakers of this Rule have no other, nor Church antienter then themselves, to warrant their Inventions.

The Church then remaineth not manifestly blemished ; then not convinced to differ from the Primitive : Then the onely
Catho-

Catholique, then the deliverer of GOD's Word, then a Secure rule; dangerous then to forsake it.

If all this bee not evident; it is at least Probably proved, and free from harme.

Securely then believed, dangerously denied; Since the authority of the Church must appeare more prevalent to justifie those Articles (pretended Errours) then Wit of man to blemish it by them.

The Conclusion.

31.

THus have I shewed the Securitie of Believers probably, at least, conformable to CHRIST's word: The danger also of Disbelievers, contemning the Authority of an antient Church, and as yet not convicted of Corruption in Faith, nor so much as charged by any authority greater than it

it selfe; but such as regenerate by her in **C H R I S T**, did forsake her for liberty of life and Belief. Hee that dispiseth it dispiseth **C H R I S T**: Who will not heare the Church, let him bee reputed as a Heathen and a Publican. And choosng the disbelieving part out of seeming Reasons, exposing themselves to needlesse danger of that Sentence, who will not believe shall bee condemned. For if the contrary Beliefe must bee supposed, at the least, Probable, then the Disbeliefe may bee a faulty denyall of **C H R I S T S** word; consequently, it may deserve damnation. This is evident to reason.

Moreover, since **G O D** hath commanded a beliefe of his Gospell, I have shewed by Reason and evident Experience of the infinite contradiction of Interpreters, left to their owne private judgements or Spirits, an absolute necessity of some living Rule;
and

and that no other can bee imagined than the Antient, believing, undisproved Church, against which all Arguments that wit can produce; if they be not cleerly evident, and beyond the degree of Probability (to which purpose it will bee necessary to disprove evidently all the proofes the said Church hath) they are insufficient to overthrow an antient received Church, declaring and proving the contrary ever since the first Instituti^on thereof.

Who then seeth not, how much it concerneth a Christian not rashly to deny what is delivered by an antient Church?

Vpon true beliefe Gods favour dependeth, on this Eternall welfare; wee expect but one Death, one irrevocable Iudgement, one eternity of Happinesse, or Misery: This is the effect of Disbelief; That is promised to Believers.

Shall a Christian adventure upon such extremities with seeming Probabilities, and leave Security ? Beliefe is secure voyd of harme. But to Disbelievers it is said, Who will not believe shall bee damned.

Graviter peccat (saith St. *August.* cap. de Baptis.) *qui in rebus ad Salutem animæ pertinentibus certis incerta præponit.* Heavie is his sinne who in matters concerning the safety of his Soule, preferreth uncertaine meanes before certaine.

Read and consider.

Farewell.

F J N J S.

Errata.

Courteous reader, besides many slips, I desire
you in the 2, Epistle, line 15. to read for the
these. pag. 3. l. 9, for the, these. & the 11, leave out
them, line 21. put in Secondly, p. 4, for fourthly.
thirdly, &c, p. 7, for religious, religions, p. 11, l.
8, for duly, daily, p. 12, l. 2, for heartly, heavy, p.
14, l. 15. read permanent, l. 10, for 8. put 18. p.
15, l. 20, insert two, before *creeds*, p. 17. l. 18, for
the read hee, p. 19. l. 11 for is it, p. 20. l. 18. for
28, 24, p. 26, l. 8. for 12, 21, pa. 25, l. 4, insert, to
shew pa. 36, l. 22, insert *isue*, p. 39, for (see
number, 3, and the 26) see num, 3, pag. 45, l. 15,
put out first:
